

Esther Lieu

Year of Call: 2011

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Overview

Esther Lieu is a specialist family lawyer with over 12 years' experience in financial remedy and private children work.

Esther's financial relief practice encompasses all matters arising between married / civil partnered couples (to include third party interests, conduct, appeals and enforcement), and unmarried couples (applications under TLATA 1996 and Schedule 1). She has appeared in the High Court seeking injunctive relief and permission to proceed following an overseas divorce and regularly advises on settlement to assist clients in managing their costs.

Her private law practice extends from domestic applications (under the Children Act 1989 and Family Law Act 1996) to jurisdictional disputes. Her cases frequently involve complex issues such as coercive and controlling behaviour, parental alienation, drug and substance abuse, mental health issues, transfer of residence and relocation applications. She is frequently instructed on multi-day Fact-Find Hearings and contested final hearings.

Esther has completed the ICCA/FLBA's Vulnerable Witness Training and comfortably deals with all types of vulnerability, howsoever arising within family proceedings. She takes a fearless approach to ensure that all court hearings are FPR 2010 Part 3A and PD3AA compliant.

She is ranked a Leading Junior (Legal 500, 2025): she is described as 'outstanding', 'supportive' and 'knowledgeable' and enjoys regular repeat instructions. Esther is a strong and tenacious advocate who always ensures that her client is comfortable and confident with her representation. She is rigorous in her case preparation and prompt in responding to her professional clients.

Esther spends most of her spare time chasing after her children, normally outdoors and often in the mud.

Recommendations

'Esther is able to build an excellent report with clients in extremely difficult circumstances, making them feel well-supported throughout the process. She is compassionate and approachable, as well as clear in her advice, and has excellent client care skills.'

Legal 500 2025/Divorce and Financial Remedy/Leading Juniors/Western Circuit

"None of this would have been possible without your help and support - I am thrilled with the result and will always be incredibly grateful to you."

Client

"Thank you for everything - for all the practical guidance, sound advice and the perfectionism with which you always drafted the pleadings and documents, all of which brought L to this point."

Client

"I have felt very well supported by you throughout your involvement in this case and could not have been more confident in your representation of me in the court room"

Client

"I just wanted to email to pass on my thanks as Esther has been fantastic and greatly helped with settling the financial case for the client as well as previously settling the children act case for another client as well."

Solicitor

"Esther Lieu was outstanding, she was supportive and explained my options very clearly. She was very understanding and knowledgeable."

Client

Academic qualifications

- College of Law, BPTC (Merit) 2012
- Inner Temple Exhibition Scholar 2011
- College of Law, GDL (Commendation) 2011
- University of London, MA - Human Rights (Merit) 2006
- University of Bristol, BSc - Philosophy and Psychology (2:1) 2005

Professional qualifications & appointments

- ICCA/FLBA's Vulnerable Witness Training

Professional bodies

- Family Law Bar Association (Treasurer, Western Circuit)
- Human Rights Lawyers Association
- Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (previously a Trustee)

Expertise

Family

Esther Lieu is a specialist family lawyer with an emphasis on private family law matters and cases involving financial provision following divorce or dissolution of marriages and separation of unmarried couples.

Finance

Esther has a busy practice in financial remedies (from pre-nuptial and separation agreements through to contested final hearings, appeals and enforcement), including applications brought under ToLATA and Schedule 1. She is a forceful negotiator at an FDR and balances the costs of further of litigation against the overarching aim of achieving the best outcome for her client. In particular she has experience of the following:

- Applications brought under ToLATA including equitable accounting claims
- Maintenance applications (brought under MCA 1973, Schedule 1 CA 1989)
- Interveners and third-party interests
- Non-matrimonial property
- Conduct cases
- Variation and enforcement applications
- Applications for financial relief following overseas divorce (MFPA 1984)
- Applications for injunctive relief
- Appeals

Notable cases

H v H (2023 – 2024)

Acted for W in a contested final hearing in which the parties continued to cohabit for 12 years post Decree Absolute. Successfully obtained findings that a Separation Agreement was not binding and three properties in H's sole name were matrimonial property. Costs awarded.

Acted for W in successfully defending an application for permission to appeal: permission refused on all Grounds, costs awarded.

Acted for W in enforcement application, costs awarded.

R-R v M v L (2023)

Acted for Intervenor responding to a s.37 MCA1973 application made by W in FR proceedings in respect of two dispositions of shares made to the Intervenor. Successfully persuaded the W at FDR to withdraw her application and Intervenor was discharged.

F v F (2023)

Acted for W in case where capital was limited (and held 95% in H name) but H income significant but complicated as employed overseas. Despite children being over 18 and no special circumstances arising, settlement agreed whereby W

retained FMH for a further 4 years and received 75% NPS upon sale, plus generous child maintenance for 4 years and spousal maintenance for 8 years.

K v W (2022)

Acted for Claimant in TLATA application in respect of the family home: property was held as Tenants in Common without a Declaration of Trust. Successfully settled at FDR on basis that interest held in equal shares (Defendant initially asserted he held 100% of the interest).

C v C (2022)

Acted for H where there was minimal capital but over £1,000,000 in pension provision. Indication at FDR rejected W's contention that she should be compensated for delayed receipt and her claim for maintenance and favourable settlement achieved.

M v M (2019)

Acted for W where charging orders had been made in respect of the family home and properties owned by the parties (under a company structure) in favour of the husband's former employer from whom he had embezzled funds. The wife had sole care of the parties' two children, and the husband had declared himself bankrupt.

B v A (2019)

Represented the father in an application brought under Schedule 1 CA1989 by the mother for child maintenance to extend beyond the child's 18th birthday on account of special circumstances.. Both applications were successfully opposed following detailed analysis of the Child Support Act 1991.

P v P (2017)

Acted for the Russian wife in protracted proceedings which included successfully obtaining permission to apply for financial relief following an overseas divorce in the Royal Courts of Justice, obtaining injunctive relief against the husband's attempt to dissipate assets, countering the husband's father's claim to a third party interest in the property and achieving a very positive outcome at final hearing.

Private law

Esther is regularly instructed in applications for child arrangements orders, specific issue and prohibited steps orders, as well as injunctions, enforcement applications, fact-finding hearings and contested final hearings. In particular, she has experience in cases involving:

- Alienating behaviours (and transfer of residence)
- Domestic Abuse (to include coercive and controlling behaviour)
- Drug and substance abuse
- Mental health issues (to personality disorders, fabricated or induced illness (FII) etc.)
- Disputed jurisdiction (within the U.K. and international)
- Internal and international relocation

Notable cases:

Y v Y (2024)

Acted for mother in a three-day FFH. Findings made included findings of physical assault by the father of the mother and the children. The father's allegation of parental alienation by the mother was not made out.

A v B v E (2024)

Acted for mother in private law proceedings in circumstances where she had been found (in public law proceedings) to have caused injuries to a non-party child, and her own children removed. Contact with her own children had since resumed and she now opposed the father's application for lives with orders.

E v E (2023)

Successfully acted for maternal grandparents in their application for Non-Molestation Orders against their son in law, and a Child Arrangements Order (lives with) in respect of their grand-daughter.

H v H (2022)

Acted for M in 3 day FFH where findings made (on the mother's allegations) that the father had: physically assaulted the mother (non-fatal strangulation), made false allegations to the nursery to undermine the mother, caused the children emotional harm and neglected the children's needs whilst under the influence of alcohol.

W v W (2019)

Represented the father during a 3 day fact-find within a long-running application for child arrangements orders, and successfully defended him in committal proceedings brought by the mother.

B v B (2019)

Acted for the father in successfully opposing the mother's application to relocate with the parties' children who lived with her.

S v S (2019)

Acted for the father following the unlawful removal of his children by the mother to Scotland. Successfully obtained an interim order that the children be returned to England and successfully argued (against the mother) that England retained jurisdiction to hear the matter. The children were returned to the father's care and he was ultimately granted a live with order in respect of both.

E v E (2018)

Represented the Children's Guardian in an application by the father for a transfer of residence. A fact-find established that the mother had alienated the father from the children; subsequently the Guardian recommended a transfer of residence which was ultimately ordered by the court following a contested final hearing.

V v G (2017)

Acted for the father seeking child arrangements orders in respect of his daughter in a long running protracted matter in the High Court which included the appointment of r.16.4 Guardian, committal proceedings against the mother (she was found guilty of contempt), a finding of fact and the making of Interim Supervision Orders in respect of the child.

FDR Hearing Service

Esther is available for private remote FDR hearings. For more information on private remote FDR hearings please [click here](#).

Articles

Esther Lieu analyses I County Council v TD & Others [2017] EWHC 379 (Fam) for Family Law Week and considers of the difference between care orders and supervision orders.

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Esther Lieu analyses W v X (Jurisdiction in matters of parental responsibility) [2017] EUECJ C-499-15 for Family Law Week

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Fact finding into serious injuries: Esther Lieu summarises A v W and Others No 1 (Fact Finding) [2016] EWFC 64 for Family Law Week.

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Esther Lieu analyses M v F [2016] EWHC 3194 (Fam) (Jan 2017) for Family Law Week.

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Esther Lieu summarises Re AB (Surrogacy: Consent) [2016] EWHC 2643 (Fam) (Nov 16).

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ECtHR Judgment finding that the delays in the mother's enforcement proceedings against her former husband for unpaid child support constituted a breach of her Article 6 rights: Veiga da Silva Braga v Portugal (Application No. 39507/13) (Aug 16).

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An analysis by Esther Lieu for Family Law Week.

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An analysis by Sarah Jennings & Esther Lieu, 3PB, with District Judge Julie Exton look at the Family Drug and Alcohol Court for Family Law Week.

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Esther Lieu explores the circumstances in which parental responsibility may be terminated and considers the effect of s.4(2A) in anticipation of the Court of Appeal's judgment in the appeal from CW v SG.

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Esther Lieu and Adam Weiss, Legal Director, The AIRE Centre, explain the ECtHR's recent decision in Raw v France which considered, amongst other matters, the enforcement of court orders and the circumstances in which a parent could represent their children in Strasbourg proceedings.

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